Sharmila Rao Thakkar, MPH, MPA, CAP®

Time, talent, treasure, ties, testimony... the possibility of philanthropy lies in everyone, everywhere.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar, MPH, MPA, CAP® is an independent philanthropic advisor and nonprofit consultant at SRT Advising & Consulting based in New York City, and partnering with social impact leaders throughout the world. With a deep passion for the transformative power of giving, Sharmila helps individuals and organizations align their resources—time, talent, treasure, ties, and testimony—with their values, interests, and motivations. She advises and coaches donors, families, and organizations on operations, strategy, grantmaking, governance and board development, multigenerational engagement, and community outreach.

With over 25 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, Sharmila has held roles as an executive leader, consultant, facilitator, mentor, speaker, and writer. She has most recently served as a fractional executive director and advisor for emerging, startup, and in-transition family foundations, leading efforts in grantmaking, next generation engagement, organizational development, and strategic planning. Her other engagements include facilitating board development and racial equity trainings, advising corporate and private foundations on governance and grantmaking, and consulting as a senior advisor to the India Philanthropy Alliance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sharmila led a nonprofit capacity building organization and disaster coalition, driving initiatives in crisis preparedness, advocacy, and sector-wide support to strengthen local nonprofits. Earlier in her career, Sharmila was the first non-family executive director of a multigenerational family foundation, overseeing all operational, programmatic, and administrative functions. She played a critical role in guiding board decisions, providing strategic direction on grantmaking and community partnership initiatives, supporting nonprofit partners, enhancing board governance and assessment, and developing next generation leadership.

Sharmila is a 21/64 certified trainer in multigenerational philanthropy and serves as an affiliate consultant with the Support Center for Nonprofit Management. She holds the Certified Advisor in Philanthropy (CAP) designation, the Certified Impact Philanthropy Advisor (IPA) credential, Meaningful Giving Guide Certification, and BoardSource Certificate of Nonprofit Board Consulting (CNBC). She is an alum of several leadership programs, including the Institute of Private Philanthropy Executive Director Institute, Council on Foundations Career Pathways, TSNE's DEIB Training Cohort for Consultants, and The Funders Network for Smart Growth & Equity PLACES Fellowship. A dedicated advocate for women, children, immigrant communities, education, public health, and philanthropic leadership, Sharmila has held leadership roles on numerous boards and committees. Her current affiliations include the Healthy Schools Campaign, National Network of Consultants to Grantmakers, Philanthropy150, and South Asian Philanthropy Project. Previously, she served with organizations such as the Chicago Foundation for Women, 21/64 Certified Advisors of Color Project, Allow Good, the South Asian Public Health Association, National Center for Family Philanthropy, and Exponent Philanthropy.

Sharmila holds a Master of Public Health (MPH) from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from the Columbia University School of International & Public Affairs, and a BA in International Relations from Brown University. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, cooking, swimming, reading, and biking with her young adult children through the greenest borough of NYC.



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